

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2625

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to mountains to Sound greenway outdoor recreation projects.

Brief Description: Funding mountains to Sound greenway outdoor recreation projects.

Sponsors: Representatives Jarrett, Upthegrove, Rodne, Simpson, Miloscia, B. Sullivan, Roberts and Springer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 1/19/06, 1/26/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates new accounts and appropriates money from the General Fund for specific recreational and scenic projects located along the portion of the I-90 corridor between King County and western Kittitas County.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Hunt and Kagi.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chandler and Orcutt.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The portion of the I-90 corridor located in King County and western Kittitas County is considered the Mountains to Sound Greenway (Greenway). The area features over 125,000 acres of forest and park land that have been obtained by federal, state, and local agencies over the past 14 years. An additional 90,000 acres are protected from development along the Greenway through the execution of conservation easements.

Summary of Bill:

The following appropriations are made from the General Fund to the following agencies:

- \$6.1 million to the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development;
- \$5 million to the Department of Transportation; and
- \$3.9 million to the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

A new account is created for each of the agencies receiving an appropriation. These accounts are known as the "Mountains to Sound Greenway Project" Accounts. The accounts are non-appropriated, with expenditures authorized by the director of the appropriate agency.

Each agency receiving funds is provided with a specific list of projects that must be completed. All projects are centered along the Greenway. The identified projects are recreational or scenic in nature, and include projects such as recreational trail development and expansion, visitor facilities enhancement, sign location, snopark improvements, and property acquisition.

Appropriation: The sum of \$15 million.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) The Greenway is a great asset for the state, and connects both eastern and western Washington. It is a 100-mile corridor of recreation and conservation lands that is larger in area than Mount Rainier National Park. The conservation efforts along the Greenway help give the I-90 corridor a distinctly Northwest feel. The Greenway, however, is being loved to death and needs investment and improvement. This one-time investment will help make sure that the Greenway achieves its potential.

The Greenways Trust has already coordinated the investment of over \$200 million in state, federal, and local money to provide a recreational area that is easy and safe to access for a large percentage of the state's population. Past investments have turned over 35 miles of abandoned logging roads into hiking trails and have planted trees and shrubs. The development of the Greenway has showcased the evolution of public land use by building partnerships throughout government and with the private sector.

The investments in this bill will provide the citizens of the state a way to access the acreage that they already own. The state investment will be added to other private funds to maximize the benefit. Many projects in the bill do not fit into existing state funding sources.

Access to quality outdoor recreation is important for the state's economy. Recreation adds to the quality of life and helps employers recruit and retain talented employees. The Greenway is a critical resource for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The Greenway is also an attractive and convenient place for volunteer groups to get outside and give back to the natural environment.

(With concerns) There should be some reluctance to use General Fund money for trail improvements. There are better sources of state funding for the projects identified in the bill, and the projects in the bill do not necessarily reflect the most significant recreational needs facing the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Jarrett, prime sponsor; Governor Mike Lowry; Senator Dan McDonald and Bill Chapman, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust; and Jonathan Guzzo, Washington Trails Association.

(With concerns) Fred Romero, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.